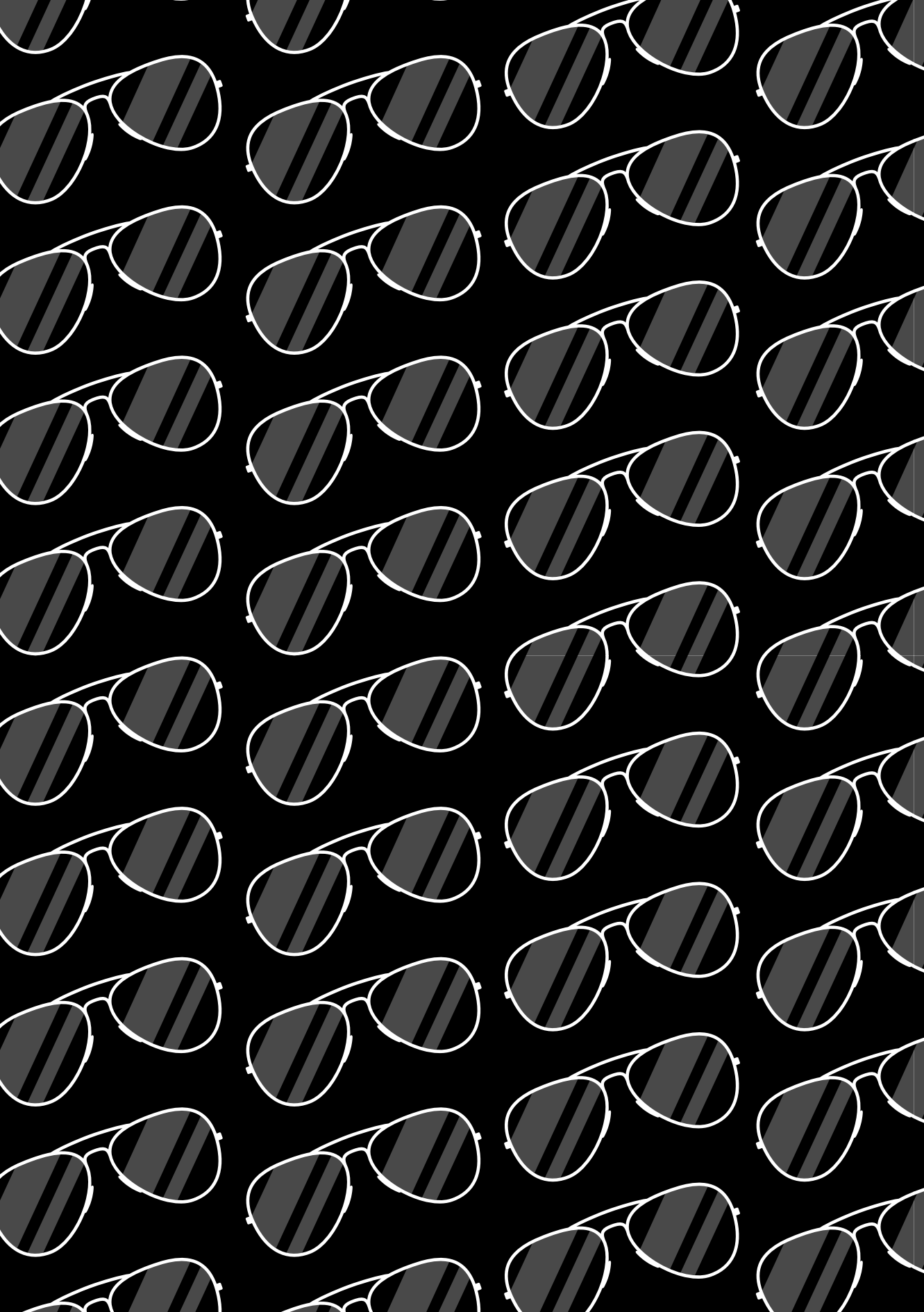


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Redesigning

ing the 70s

How Tarantino recreated his childhood LA



A few years after starring in ‘La La Land,’ Los Angeles has landed a new leading role, this time in the new 9th movie by Quentin Tarantino “Once Upon a Time In Hollywood”. And from the first trailer, it’s clear that LA shines.

Though Tinseltown makes seemingly endless cameos in film and TV, it’s the rare movie that makes a true star out of the City Of Angels. “La La Land,” a veritable parade of iconic Los Angeles landmarks did it with endearing sentimentality. One would expect Tarantino, the master of modern pulp, to do it with the edgy affection of a native son. So, Quentin envisioned a film that would act as a tribute to the Los Angeles of his youth. And to him the city’s billboards, neon signs, movie posters, and advertisements weren’t just background details—they were the soul of that era. To bring this vision to life, Tarantino turned to Tina Charad, a graphic designer known for her ability to weave stories through visual design.

While her name may not be as widely recognized as Tarantino’s or Leonardo DiCaprio’s, Charad previously worked in big movies like *Lalaland*(2016) and *Suicide Squad*(2016), and in his eyes she was essential in crafting the rich, hyper-detailed world of *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*. From vintage billboard advertisements to faux movie posters and record sleeves, Charad’s designs don’t just decorate the world—they define it. They pull you into the sun-soaked streets of 1969 LA,

immersing you in a universe where every graphic element feels plucked straight out of history. As a true love letter to 1960s Hollywood.

Charad approached the project with a clear sense of purpose: to recreate the visual language of 1969 with painstaking authenticity. But this wasn’t just about mimicry—it was about understanding the cultural zeitgeist of the time and reflecting it in every design. From the bold, hand-painted lettering on fictional movie posters to the intricate packaging for products like soda bottles and cigarette packs, Charad’s work captures the optimism, kitsch, and unapologetic flamboyance of the era.

Her design work doesn’t scream for attention; instead, it blends seamlessly into the world of the film, which is precisely what makes it so effective. Charad’s creations don’t look like props—they look real, as though they were pulled straight from the shelves of a 1969 corner store or slapped onto the side of a Sunset Strip building.

One of the standout aspects of Charad’s work is her contribution to the fictional *www* career of Rick Dalton, Leonardo DiCaprio’s washed-up TV actor desperately clinging to relevance. Dalton’s entire career history is brought to life through Charad’s designs, from the lurid posters of his B-movie Westerns to the promotional material for his role in *The 14 Fists of McCluskey*.





The posters are particularly noteworthy, brimming with the exaggerated drama and gaudy aesthetics of 1960s exploitation cinema. Titles like *Kill Me Quick*, *Ringo*, *Said the Gringo* and *Operazione Dyn-O-Mite!* are accompanied by vibrant hand-drawn illustrations, deliberately designed to mimic the styles of the time. Each piece is so convincingly retro that they look like they could be hanging in the

lobby of a 1960s movie theater, perfectly capturing the pulpy charm of the era's B-movie industry.

Charad's designs are not just visually stunning—they're packed with narrative depth. They offer insight into Rick Dalton's career trajectory, his insecurities, and his attempts to stay relevant in an industry that's rapidly changing around him. Through these designs,



we don't just see Dalton as an actor—we see him as a man caught between the past and an uncertain future.

But beyond Dalton's fictional career, Charad also turned her attention to recreating the visual identity of 1969 Los Angeles itself. And this was no small task. The LA of *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* is a sprawling patchwork of iconic landmarks, retro

storefronts, and eclectic advertisements, and each of these elements needed to feel authentic, and in a sense, lived on.

Charad's team painstakingly researched vintage typography, color palettes, and graphic styles to ensure that every design element felt true to the time period. From the hand-painted signs on the facades of restaurants to





the bold graphics of period-accurate magazines, no detail was too small to escape Charad's scrutiny.

One of the most memorable examples of this attention to detail is the recreation of the famous Cinerama Dome marquee. For a brief moment in the film, we see the marquee advertising the 1969 film *Krakatoa: East of Java*. It's a blink-and-you'll-miss-it detail, but Charad ensured that the typography, lighting, and layout were all historically accurate. These small touches may go unnoticed by the casual viewer, but they contribute

to the film's immersive authenticity, allowing the audience to fully believe in the world they're seeing on screen.

One of Charad's most fascinating contributions to *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* is her creation of fictional brands and products. While many films use generic props for items like cereal boxes or soda bottles, Charad's designs are anything but generic. Each product feels like it has its own backstory, as though it were a relic of a real, forgotten world.





For example, Charad took the fictional cigarette brand called Red Apple, a recurring Tarantino Easter egg that has appeared in several of his films. In *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*, Red Apple cigarettes are featured prominently in a fake TV commercial starring Rick Dalton. Charad's packaging design for the cigarettes is a perfect distillation of 1960s advertising, with bold, colorful typography and a kitschy slogan ("Smoke Red Apple, feel yourself at ease!"). It's playful, self-aware, and utterly in sync with the film's tone.

These fictional products, posters, signs in the street and many other graphic elements add a layer of depth

to the film's world-building. They make the world feel real, not just for the characters inhabiting it but for the audience watching it.



In an era where CGI and digital effects often dominate discussions of production design, Charad's analog approach fits perfectly with Tarantino's practical style. Her commitment to authenticity, her meticulous attention to detail, and her ability to infuse her designs with narrative meaning brought 1969 LA back to life in all its vibrant, messy, and nostalgic glory.







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by Eduardo Wahba